

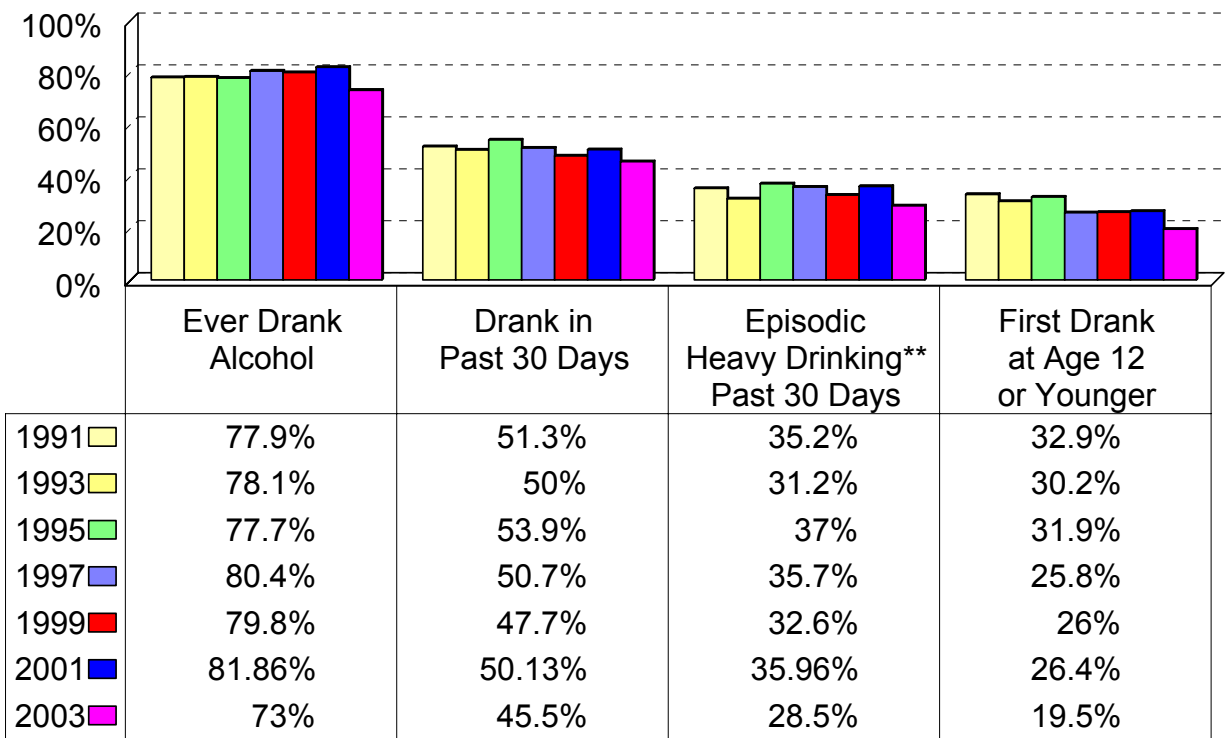
# Alcohol

The Youth Risk Behavior Survey includes questions on drinking history, age at first use, current alcohol use, heavy drinking, drinking and driving, alcohol use prior to sex, and drinking on school property. The survey specifies to students that drinking alcohol “includes drinking beer, wine, wine coolers, and liquor such as rum, gin, vodka, or whiskey” and “does not include drinking a few sips of wine for religious purposes.”

**Highlights**

Seven out of every ten (73%) teens reported ever drinking alcohol. Nearly half of them (45.5%) reported drinking in the past 30 days prior to the survey and 28.5% reported episodic heavy drinking (five drinks at one sitting) at the same time. Approximately 19.5% of respondents had their first drink at age 12 or younger.

Figure 1: Alcohol Consumption\*  
High School Students

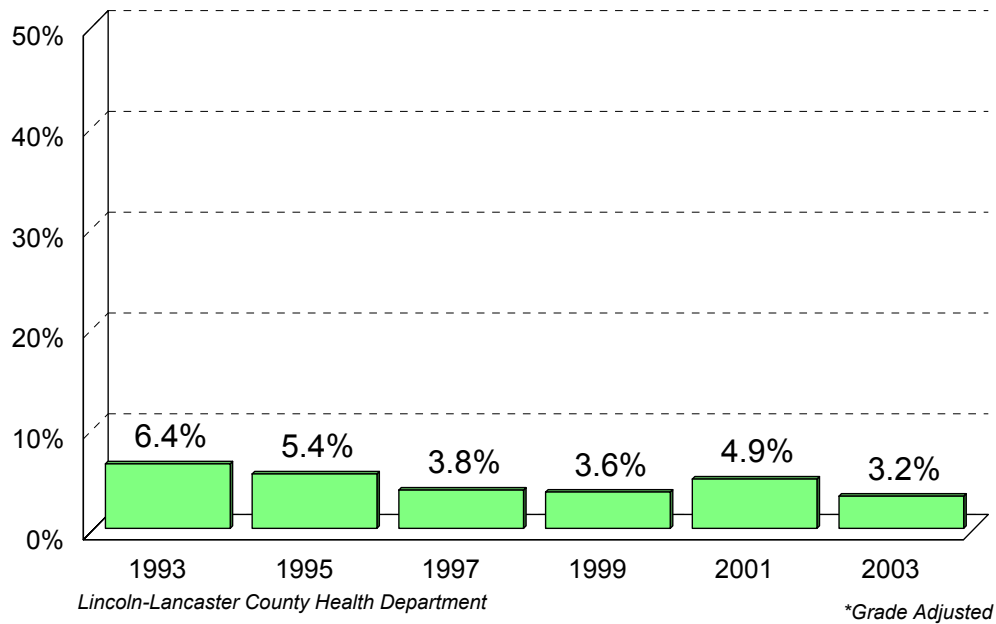


\*\* Five drinks at one sitting

\*Grade Adjusted

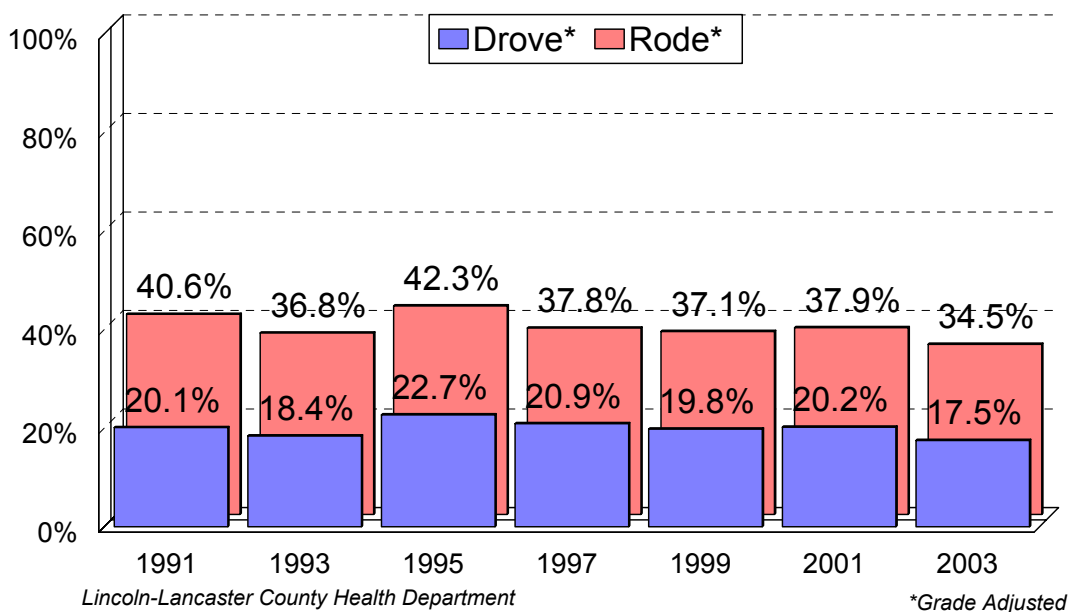
L About 3% of teens reported drinking on school property during the past 30 days indicating a significant decrease since 1993.

**Figure 2: Alcohol Consumption On School Property\***  
High School Students, Reported During the Past 30 Days



L The proportion of teens driving after drinking or riding in a car driven by someone who had been drinking has not shown any significant change since 1997.

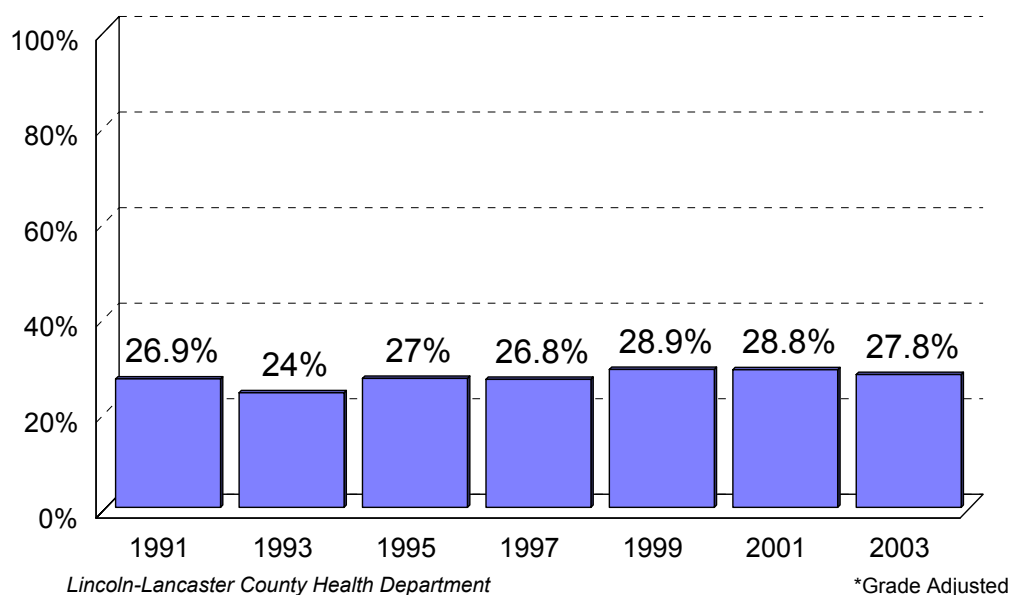
**Figure 3: "Drunk Driving"\***  
High School Students Who Reported That During the Past 30 Days They Drove After Drinking and Rode With Someone Who Had Been Drinking



L Among high school students who reported having sex, 27.8% drank alcohol or used drugs prior to last sexual intercourse. This trend has remained stable since 1991.

**Figure 4: Alcohol or Drug Use Prior to Last Sexual Intercourse\***

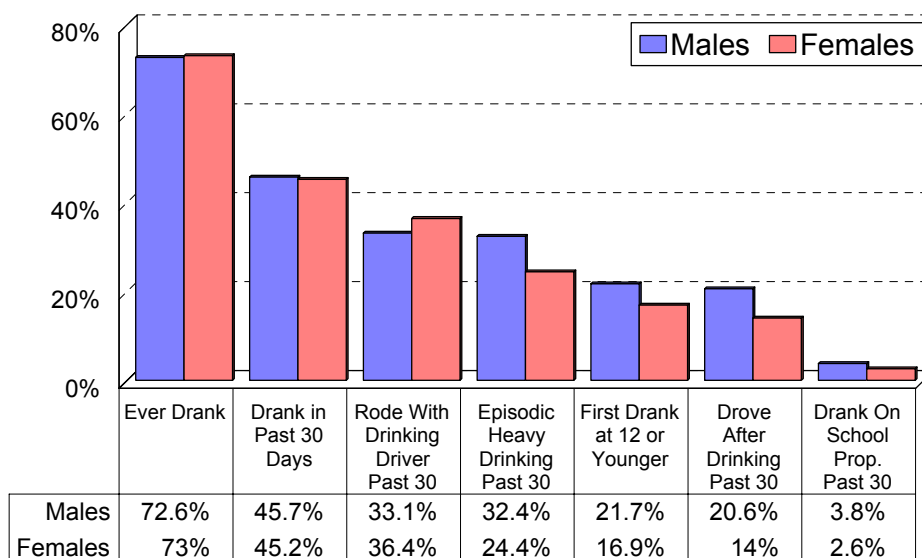
High School Students Who Reported Having Had Sex



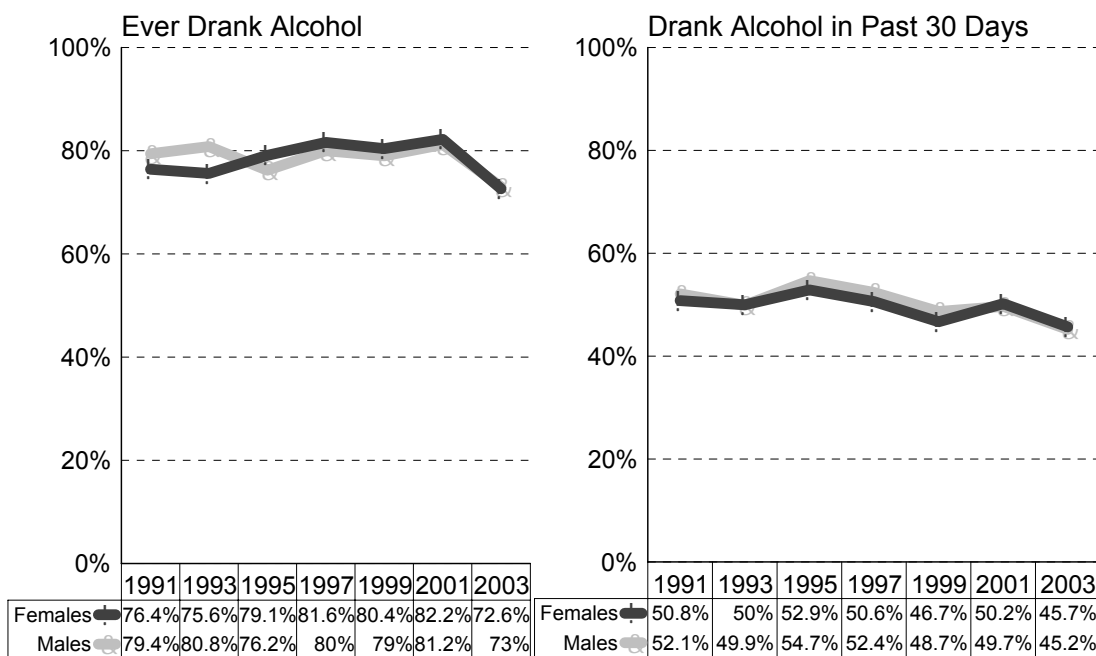
L Figures 5,6,7,8 and 9 depict alcohol consumption, age of first alcohol consumption, episodic heavy drinking, drinking and driving, and drinking on school property by gender of the survey respondents.

**Figure 5: Alcohol Consumption\***

2003 High School Students



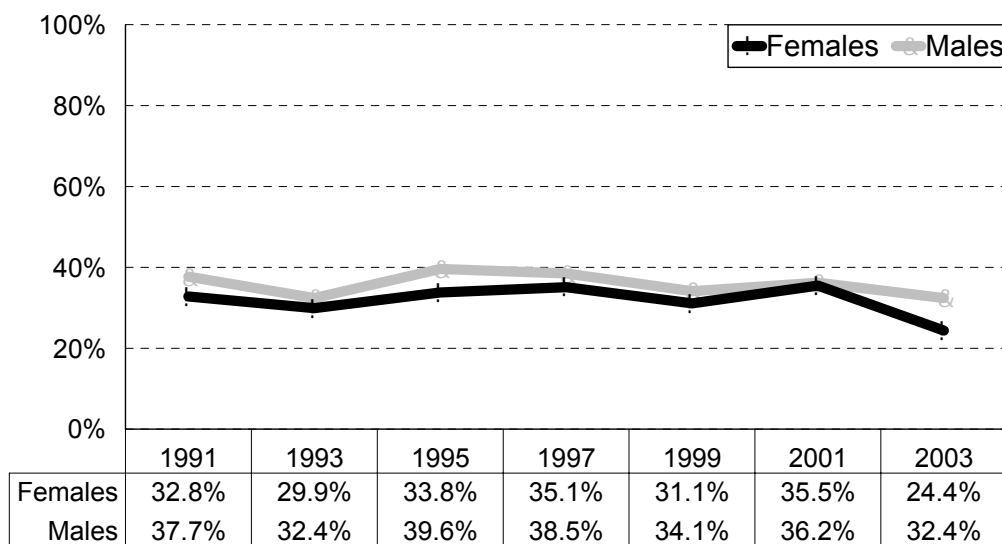
**Figure 6: Ever/Recently Drank Alcohol\***  
High School Students



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\*Grade Adjusted

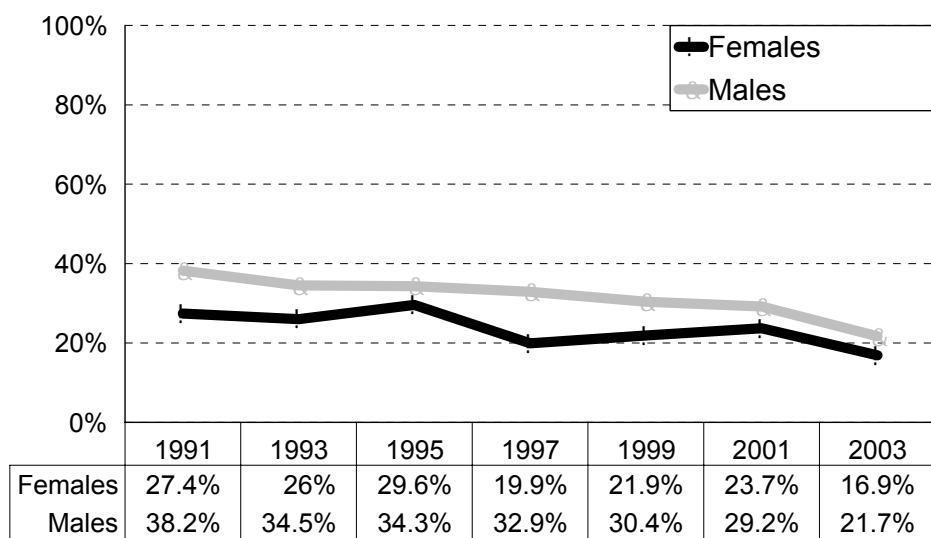
**Figure 7: Episodic Heavy Drinking\***  
High School Students Who Reported Drinking 5+ Drinks In One Sitting  
During the Past 30 Days



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\*Grade Adjusted

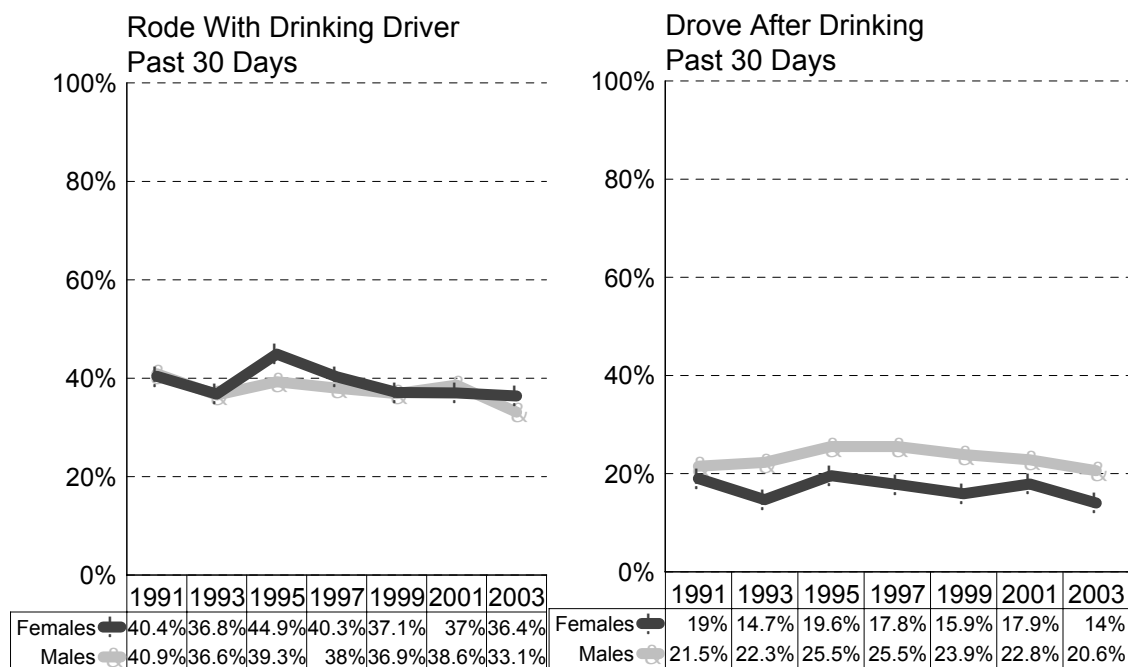
**Figure 8: First Alcohol Consumption\***  
High School Students Who Reported Their First Drink  
of Alcohol ("Other Than a Few Sips") at 12 or Younger



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\*Grade Adjusted

**Figure 9: "Drunk Driving"\***  
High School Students

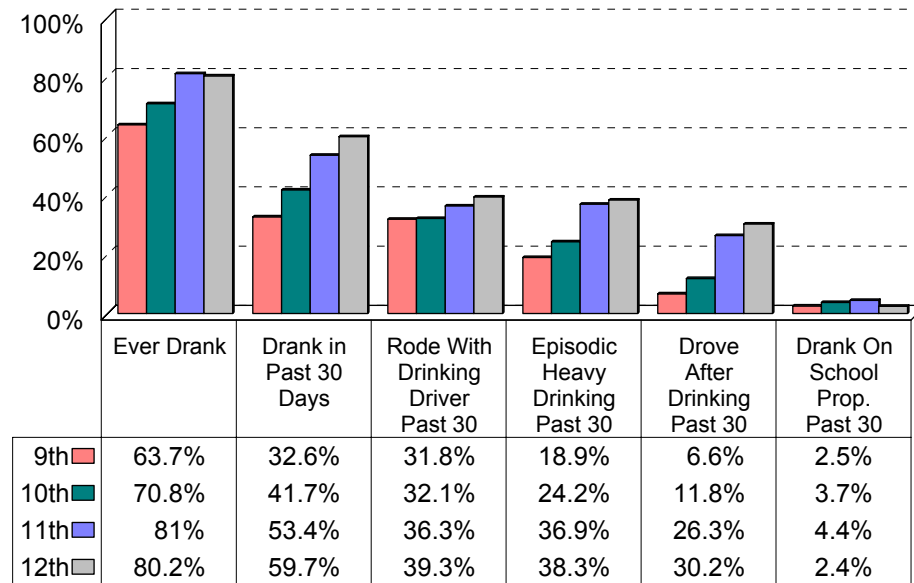


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\*Grade Adjusted

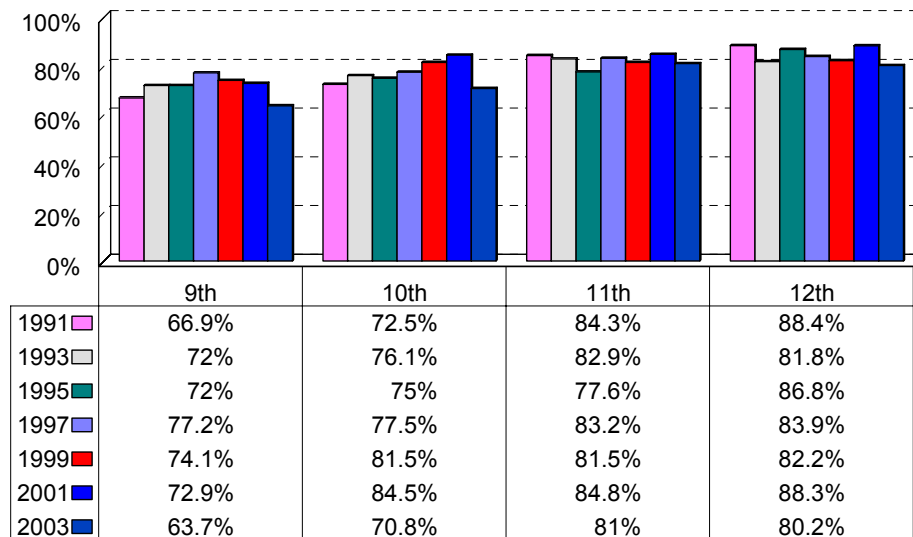
L During the 1990s and in 2003, teens in older grades were more likely than those in younger grades to report alcohol consumption. For all alcohol indicators, there was little discernible increase or decrease over time within individual grades (Figs. 10-13).

**Figure 10: Alcohol Consumption by Grade**  
2003 High School Students



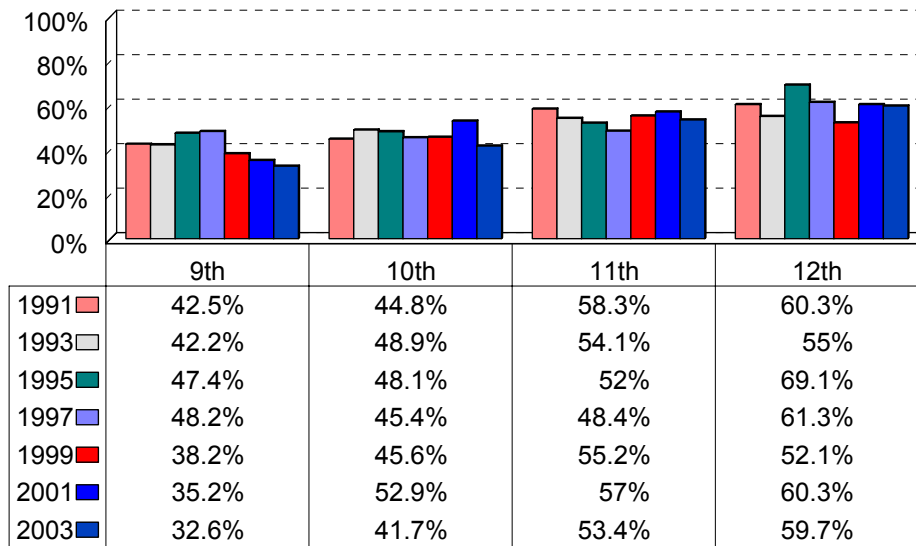
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**Figure 11: Ever Drank by Grade**  
High School Students Who Reported Ever Drinking Alcohol, other than a few sips, During Their Lifetime



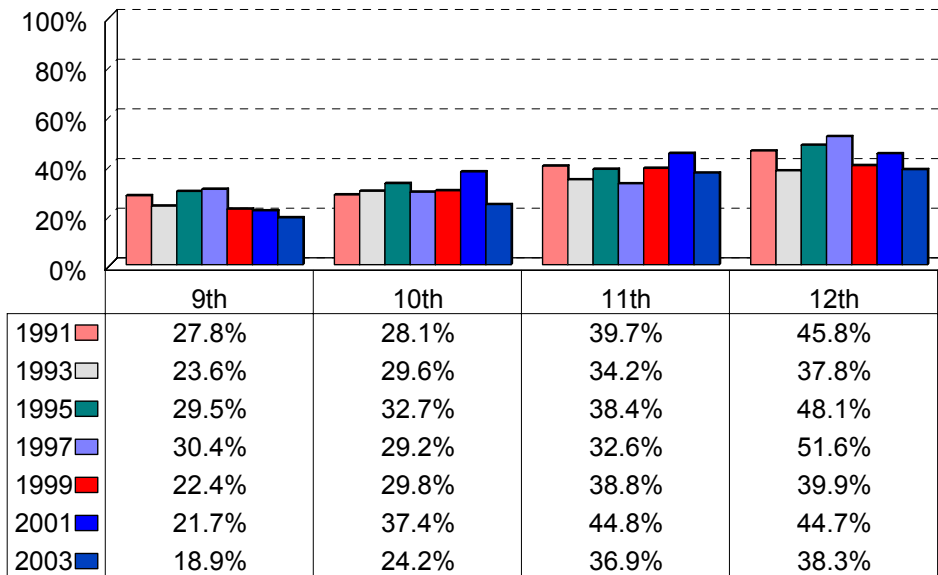
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**Figure 12: Alcohol Consumption by Grade**  
High School Students Who Reported Drinking Alcohol During the Past 30 Days



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**Figure 13: Episodic Heavy Drinking by Grade**  
High School Students Who Reported Drinking 5+ Drinks In One Sitting During the Past 30 Days



*Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department*

## **Public Health Comment: Alcohol**

-David Humm

The consequences and costs of youth alcohol use are enormous and alcohol is easily the nation's top drug of abuse among adolescents. Many of these harmful consequences are immediate and all too evident including: injuries or death due to impaired driving, violence, sexual assault, unwanted pregnancies, STD's, and educational failure. Young people who decide to drink usually drink more often and more heavily in the 12<sup>th</sup> grade, but nationally nearly 29.1% of the high school students reported in 2001 that they had their first drink of alcohol, other than a few sips, before age 13. This measure is significant because studies show that the longer the onset of first use, the less likely a young person will be affected by an alcohol problem in the future. In Lancaster County we have seen a positive trend in this first drink data. In 1991 32.9% of high school students indicated that they had their first drink before the age of 13, while the 2003 survey reveals that only 19.5% had their first drink before this age.

A wide range of educational and enforcement measures need to be used to continue to boost compliance with laws that prohibit selling or providing alcohol to children, adolescents, and young adults under the legal drinking age of 21. Measures that have been widely suggested include: strict enforcement of laws prohibiting the use of alcohol by youth, strict regulation of alcohol advertising, promotion of educational programs for servers (bartenders, waiters, store clerks, etc), encouragement of alcohol-free youth parties, and a change in community practices that make alcoholic beverages easily accessible to underage youth.

Alcohol abuse among both adults and youth is a dangerous problem that must continue to be addressed through on-going prevention efforts and through recognition that this behavior is not acceptable. Many organizations in Lancaster County address issues related to alcohol abuse. Among them are the Lincoln Council on Alcoholism and Drugs, NU Directions, Mothers Against Drunk Driving, Responsible Hospitality Council, Region V Systems, hospitals, treatment centers and self-help programs. With collaborative prevention efforts focused on a comprehensive approach, Lancaster County youth will benefit from making positive choices relating to alcohol use.